Identifying and Teaching the Gifted Music Student

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

This examination of the issues surrounding the problems of teaching the gifted music student in the classroom is divided into two separate parts. The first part being a presentation made before the Ball State University chapter of the Music Educator's National Conference, and the second part being a printed resource guide for music educators. The presentation consisted of a lecture and question-and-answer session that covered the identification and teaching of musically gifted students. The resource guide consists of a booklet divided into four distinct chapters. The first chapter, "A Brief History of Gifted Education," examines the phenomenon of gifted education from ancient times to the present. The second chapter, "Towards a Definition of Musical Giftedness," seeks to define the somewhat abstract term "musically gifted." The third chapter, "Identifying the Gifted Music Student," provides resources and ideas for the classroom teacher to aid in the discovery of gifted students. The fourth chapter, "Teaching the Gifted Music Student," presents an array of strategies designed to facilitate the instruction of gifted students within the music classroom. The four chapters of the guide work together to create a strong resource for the music educator who wishes to create curriculum alternatives for gifted and talented students.

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Identifying and Teaching the Gifted Music Student

A Resource Guide for Music Educators

Benjamin P. Carr

INTRODUCTION

The purpose in creating this guide for the music educator stems from a lack of discussion and examination of the particular issues brought to the music classroom by the gifted and talented student. Often, undergraduate methods courses concern themselves with teaching pre-service teachers how to instruct the average students in their classrooms. Unfortunately, if these future teachers merely focus on the middle fifty percent of the classroom, another fifty percent of the classroom remains struggling at best or, at worst, failing and dropping out of the class. Teaching a mere one out of two students is certainly not the goal of any educator, whose responsibility is to teach each and every child in their classroom. This guide seeks to aid the professional music teacher or pre-service teacher in teaching the top twenty-five percent of a music class whose special talents are often unused and wasted.

This guide is divided into four principle sections, each dealing with a major component of the gifted music student equation. The first section, "A Brief History of Gifted Education," focuses on past methods of teaching gifted students and discusses how current educational thought is shaped by that past. The second unit, "Towards a Definition of Musical Giftedness," looks at a wide range of definitions of "gifted and talented" and seeks to distill them into a basic definition of "musical giftedness." The third section, "Identifying the Gifted Music Student," is focused on helping the music educator, no matter their grade level or area of expertise, determine which students in their classroom can be considered "gifted." The fourth and final section, "Teaching the Gifted Music Student," offers practical classroom advice for music educators who are looking for ways to nurture the gifted talent in their classroom.

It is the author's hope that you, the teacher, will find this guide to be a useful resource that will help you address the concerns of those students within your classroom who demonstrate exceptional ability within the field of music.

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Chapter One:

A Brief History of Gifted and Talented Education

Introduction

One of the keys to teaching gifted students is to possess an understanding of the history of gifted education. Gifted education has undergone a number of changes in both theory and practice that have contributed to the state of gifted programs in the United States today. The concepts of what defines giftedness, what causes talent, and how to measure exceptionality have undergone dramatic changes since the early years of gifted education. It is also important to examine the evolution of the idea that students who are gifted in the areas of the arts should receive the same amount of special instruction as those who are gifted in the areas of linguistics and mathematics.

Early Gifted Education

Colangelo and Davis (1997) point out that the identification and education of gifted youth has been a part of virtually all societies in recorded history. However, the definition of "giftedness" in these societies varied considerably. In ancient Athens, upper-class boys were sent to private schools to learn math, logic, rhetoric, politics, and culture from sophists. At the same time, in Sparta, "giftedness" was defined not necessarily by intellect, but rather by outstanding combat skills and physical prowess. Renaissance Europe valued giftedness in the areas of art, architecture, and literature, honoring such talented individuals with wealth and social status.

Perhaps the most enlightened view of gifted education, according to Colangelo and Davis (1997) is that of the Tang Dynasty of China, who brought its child prodigies to the imperial court. Although the Tang Dynasty flourished around 600 B.C., they anticipated several tenets of modern gifted education:

> First, they accepted a multiple-talent conception of giftedness, valuing literary ability, leadership, imagination, reading speed, reasoning, and other talents. Second, they recognized that some precocious youth would grow up to be average; some average youth would later show gifts; and true child prodigies would show gifts and talents throughout their lives. Third, they realized that the abilities of even the most gifted would not develop without special training. Fourth, they believed that education should be available to children of all social classes, but that children should be educated according to their abilities (5).

In America, gifted education has continually evolved to the form that exists today. A large number of events, both outside the country and in, have greatly influenced the development of gifted education. Sisk (1990) claims that the education of the gifted in America began in the American colonies in 1635 and 1636 with the establishment of the Boston Latin Grammar School and Harvard College. However, it is important to note that this "education of the gifted" applied only to those who had the means to pay the fees of the school, not necessarily those with the ability to succeed. Colangelo and Davis (1997) point out that "some gifted youth were accommodated only in the sense that attending secondary school and college was based on both academic achievement and the ability to pay the fees" (5). The first real example of gifted education is the initiation of tracking, in 1870, by the St. Louis school system, which allowed some students to complete their first eight grades in less than eight years. Following this, several school systems instituted acceleration programs for their gifted students. In fact, approximately two-thirds of all large cities in the 1920s had created programs for their gifted and talented students.

Intelligence Testing and Research

The earliest significant research into the matter of intelligence or genius, is generally credited to Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), an English scientist who was heavily influenced by the work of his cousin, Charles Darwin (Davis and Rimm 1998). Galton believed that one's sensory ability (which he used to determine intelligence) was determined by heredity

and natural selection. In 1869, Galton published *Hereditary Genius*, which reported that persons of distinguished intellect seemed to come from succeeding generations of distinguished families. However, his belief that heredity was the sole determining factor in intelligence overlooked the simple fact that the "distinguished" intellects he studied also inherit a superior environment, wealth, privilege, and opportunity from their families—all factors that make it far easier to become distinguished. Piirto (1994) points out that "the clustering of historical celebrities along family lines may say more about social advantage and class privilege than about the genetics of genius" (21). Galton did, however, prove that socio-economic status is an important factor in the ultimate achievements of those who are born gifted.

In the 1890s, a significant advance was made in the assessment and evaluation of intelligence. Alfred Binet was hired by government officials in Paris to create a test by which "dull" children could be identified for special education programs (Davis and Rimm 1998). The need for this test was evident, since the only previous measure of student abilities were the biased observations of classroom teachers. In devising this test, Binet discovered that normal students and dull students did not test differently when comparing hand squeezing strength, pain sensitivity, or agility. However, Binet did discover a wide gap between normal and dull students when he tested attention span, memory, judgment, reasoning, and comprehension, which he used to obtain results for his test (Colangelo and Davis 1997). According to Davis and Rimm (1998) one of the most significant contributions of Binet was his concept of "mental age." This concept holds that children grow in intelligence, and that every child is either at the proper stage for his or her mental development, is ahead of that development, or behind. Obviously, the important observation

for gifted education was that students whose "mental age" was more advanced than that of their peers could be tested and placed in special programs for precocious youth.

Sisk (1990) calls Lewis Terman, the man who followed up the work of Binet, "a major catalyst for education of the gifted." One of his contributions to the area of intelligence testing was his production, in 1916, of the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale*, an Americanized and modified version of the tests Binet devised to evaluate the children of Paris. This version of the test was able to not only test the differences between dull and normal children, but could be used to evaluate average and above-average children as well (Davis and Rimm 1998). His other major contribution was the first longitudinal study of gifted children. Consisting of 1,528 nine-year-old children that Terman identified as scoring above 135 on the Stanford-Binet test, this study was the first to examine gifted children as a group. According to Sisk (1990), Terman's major findings were that:

- The gifted differ among themselves in many ways.
- The stereotypes of the gifted child as puny, asocial, or pre-psychotic are unfounded.
- The most intelligent child in a class is often the youngest.
- Superiority in intelligence is maintained through adulthood.
- Instructional acceleration at all levels is beneficial.
- Mental age continues to increase into middle age (36).

Davis and Rimm also point out some of the noteworthy conclusions of the Terman study:

- While in elementary and secondary school, those who were allowed to accelerate according to their intellectual potential were more successful. Those not permitted to accelerate developed poor work habits that sometimes wrecked college careers.
- Differences between the most and least successful gifted men indicated that family values and parents' education were major factors. For example, 50 percent of the parents of Terman's "most productive" group were college graduates, but only 15 percent of the parents of the "least productive" group had college degrees.
- On the downside, and with benefit of hindsight, restricting the identification of "genius" or "giftedness" to high IQ scores is severely limiting; **artistic and creative genius in a single area were ignored** [boldface mine].
- As another negative, Terman's conclusions regarding the mental and social health of his bright children swayed educators for many decades to ignore the sometimes desperate counseling needs of gifted children (6).

Further work with gifted children by Leta Hollingworth is also significant in the history of gifted education. Hollingworth was the first to recognize that gifted children require special instruction in order to develop their unique characteristics and capabilities. During her work with gifted students in the New York City schools (which began in 1937), Hollingworth observed that, in the regular classroom, "children above 140 IQ waste about half their time; children above 170 IQ spend most of their time in many kinds of 'bizarre and wasteful' activity" (Rimm and Davis 1997, 7). She observed that adults misunderstand many precocious children, leading them to become apathetic in school, in turn resulting in poor achievement. To this end, Hollingworth's gifted children spent half of their time working on regular classroom curriculum and the other half involved in enrichment activities (which included lessons of extra depth in music). Hollingworth also noted that highly intelligent children are very emotionally vulnerable due to the fact that their intellectual development outpaces their physical development. In her work, she sought to ease the feelings of alienation that many gifted children feel in the regular classroom.

Contemporary Gifted Education in the United States

Gifted education in America received little attention until 1957, when the U.S.S.R. launched Sputnik into space, winning the space race. As a result, mainstream America, most notably the press, who, until this point, had not been concerned with education, criticized the state of American education. What resulted was a mobilization on all levels to identify and develop the best and the brightest students in order to compete with the Soviets. According to Piirto (1998), acceleration and ability grouping programs were installed in schools, academic course work was condensed for gifted students, and interest in the education of

gifted reached a fever pitch. Unfortunately, this interest was to fizzle in the next five years and the education of the gifted would, once again, be largely ignored for another decade (Davis and Rimm 1998).

Education of the Gifted and Talented, a report written by the commissioner of the U.S. Office of Education, Sidney Marland, was given to the U.S. Congress in 1971 and represented an important step in the long-ignored area of gifted education (Piirto 1998). The Marland report led to a public law that defined gifted and talented children as "those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any" of five areas:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Visual and performing arts ability
5. Psychomotor ability

Additionally, the Marland report pointed out that *at least* 3 percent, and possibly as many as 15 percent of the school population of America would meet that definition of "gifted and talented." This important observation showed that gifted education was not simply for a very small elite, but for a large percentage of the school population. With this new definition of giftedness, schools could begin to more accurately identify and instruct their gifted student populations.

Although the Marland report aided the cause of gifted education by defining characteristics of gifted and talented children, it apparently did not have its desired effect of improving the state of gifted education. *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, found that more than fifty percent of the gifted

student population did not match their tested ability with comparative achievement in the classroom.

In 1988, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act passed the U.S. Congress (Piirto 1994). This Act called gifted and talented students "a natural resource vital to the future of the Nation and its security and well-being." The Act offered a new definition of the gifted and talented student as follows:

> Children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities (Piirto 1994, 8).

The Javits Act also set up a national agenda for research, teacher training, and supplemental funds, recognizing the limited, but vital role that the federal government needed to play in the education of gifted and talented students.

In 1991, two important events took place that had ramifications for gifted education. The first of these was the establishment, by Joseph Renzulli, of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) (Davis and Rimm 1998). A collaborative effort, the NRC/GT consists of institutions of higher learning, state education departments, public and private schools, professional organizations, parent groups, and other stakeholders in the issues of gifted education. The NRC/GT has five major goals for its research including:

1. Identifying fair identification procedures for gifted and talented individuals and recognizing effective programming practices.
2. Describe financial, administrative, policy, and staff-training activities that will make effective gifted education practices a reality in schools serving all students.
3. Disseminate information about gifted and talented education to educators, policy-makers, and parents.

4. Implement effective practices across all grade levels via state and district policies, regulations and resources, and into school reform.
5. Explore the implications of good practices for the education of the gifted and talented with the future of gifted education, as well as education in general (Davis and Rimm 1998).

The establishment of the NRC/GT remains an important part of the modern history of gifted education because it stands as the first research center devoted exclusively to the examination of issues facing gifted and talented education.

The other important event in 1991 was the proposal by an advisory panel to the Javits Act administrators in the U.S. Office of Educational Research to revise the definition of gifted and talented students. Motivated by new cognitive and developmental research, this proposal was presented in the report *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*. In the new definition the word "gifted" was removed, replaced by the terms "outstanding talent" and "exceptional talent." Despite the semantics, the report did propose that "outstanding talent" occurs in all groups and cultures, and is not necessarily indicated by a test score. Rather, the report said that "talent" was indicated by "high performance capability in the intellectual, in the creative, and in the artistic student" (Piirto 1994, 9).

One other event in the 1990's influenced thought concerning gifted education, although it was not a positive influence. Published in 1994, *The Bell Curve*, by Herrnstein and Murray appeared at first to be a boon to the gifted education community, since the authors supported programs for gifted education. However, many educational researchers pointed to the many problems with *The Bell Curve*, calling the authors "mean-spirited" and "prejudiced." Their research and findings that a high IQ translates into more professional

success disregarded the modern conceptions of intelligence as defined by Gardner, Sternberg, and others. The principle problem with Herrnstein and Murray's book is that it took only IQ scores into account when defining "intelligence" and "giftedness" when it is apparent that IQ tests only measure a small range of intelligence (Davis and Rimm 1998).

Conclusion

The abridged history above is by no means a comprehensive view of every significant event in the history of gifted education. Rather, it is intended to show that gifted education has undergone several major changes in its focus and aim over the past hundred years. The concept of a single measure of intelligence, as determined by an IQ score, is no longer the principle characteristic of a gifted student, as it was in the early part of the 20th century. Rather, students who excel at any number of different activities are labeled as gifted and, as such, can be given the appropriate types of instruction that they deserve.

It is curious to note that in all of the history of gifted education presented thus far, scant mention is made of specific identification techniques or instructional methods that are involved in teaching the gifted music student. In the next few chapters, we will examine those issues in more detail.

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Chapter Two:

Towards A Definition of Musical Giftedness

Introduction

In seeking to identify and teach those students whom we feel should be considered "gifted and talented" in music, we must first solve a major problem that confronts any that teach these "special" students. This problem is twofold for music educators: how do we define "musical giftedness" and how do we distinguish it from other forms of giftedness? The answer to these two questions must be the foundation for the establishment of any program or specialized instruction for gifted music students.

Why is this definition of "gifted" so important? Without clearly labeling what we feel is extraordinary, there is no possible way to formally identify those students with special abilities. Finding gifted students without a definition of giftedness is like trying to pick a good quarterback without knowing how to play football. Our definitions of "giftedness" will also help determine how and why we teach certain content to those students that we feel are advanced learners in one way or another.

No direct definition of musical giftedness exists, although most experts acknowledge that the fact that some musical learners are more precocious than others. In fact, thirty-two states recognize that there are gifted and talented students with "advanced abilities in the fine and performing arts" (Richardson 1990). What are these abilities? What makes them advanced? Fortunately, we, as music educators, can utilize much of the work done in other academic areas to determine a definition of giftedness within our own area of expertise.

It is also worth pointing out that much of the information in this chapter relies on differing points of view. The theories that have been formulated are all based on different value systems about what determines talent and giftedness. Some theorists recognize general intelligence, while others value motivation to a great extent. In the end, the ultimate definition of

"musical giftedness" will depend upon your own personal values as much as it derives from one of the other popular views.

Five Categories Of Definitions

In 1978, Stankowski delineated five categories that all definitions of "gifts" and "talents" fall into. These categories are as follows:

1. *After-the-fact*. These definitions use evidence of prominent achievement in an important segment of human life as the criterion for giftedness. These definitions would identify such extraordinary talents as Einstein, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Stravinsky as gifted and talented. Unfortunately, these definitions are useless to the teacher due to the fact that the gifted individual must reach full maturity before they can be identified.
2. *IQ*. Utilizing the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, these definitions pick a certain point on the IQ scale to determine giftedness. Anyone scoring above this point is considered to fall under the term "gifted." Unfortunately, these definitions ignore talents in other areas beyond the ones measured by the test, such as creativity and motivation.
3. *Percentage*. A definition based on percentage sets a specific proportion of a school population as "gifted." This number can be anywhere from 1 – 20 percent. How the percentage is determined can be based upon IQ testing, classroom grades, or any other factor deemed important enough to be used. Like IQ definitions, these definitions often exclude talented students in music and art, since their products are not always quantifiable.
4. *Talent*. These definitions focus on students who excel in a certain area of the school curriculum. These areas may be in the sciences, math, writing, or the arts.

5. *Creativity*. Some definitions emphasize the importance of divergent thinking as the main criterion for giftedness. These definitions call students who think outside the scope of traditional thinking "gifted and talented."

As you can see, the most useful definitions for the music educator are talent and creativity definitions, as they are the most likely to help identify gifted and talented students in the areas of the arts.

Theoretical vs. Functional Definitions

Marienne Uszler (1992), a professor of piano pedagogy at University of Southern California, points out that there is no consensus on how exactly to define "giftedness," even among experts. However, Uszler does state that definitions of giftedness generally fall into two categories: theoretical definitions and functional definitions. Each of these types seeks to elucidate what giftedness is, however, each does so for a different reason.

The first type of definition is the theoretical definition. These definitions are generally proposed and used by individuals who "seek to define giftedness philosophically or 'in essence'" (Uszler 1992). The individuals who use these definitions are generally philosophers, psychologists, and educational theorists who are looking for a definition that does not necessarily apply to a regular classroom environment.

Theoretical definitions are generally in agreement that that giftedness consists of two main factors: (1) a special ability and (2) a very high degree of that ability. However, these definitions do not agree on what, exactly, that ability is. Some definitions see "ability" as a single, universal quality such as intelligence, which can be measured by the traditional IQ scale. Other definitions call creativity the defining quality of special ability. Furthermore, some theorists, such as Howard Gardner, propose that ability can come in many forms due to the

presence of multiple intelligences. For our purposes as music educators, we must decide exactly which musical abilities that we will consider as those that define giftedness in the area of music. We must also decide whether abilities outside the realm of music will be utilized in our definition of the musically gifted student.

On the other side of the definition coin are functional definitions of what determines talent and giftedness. These definitions have a strong basis in pragmatic philosophies of education that utilize more common-sense ideas. These definitions are largely proposed and utilized by those with the power to impact change upon the educational system. These definitions are often quantifiable or have definite criterion on which they are based. Functional definitions often play the greatest role in the identification of gifted and talented students, as they present a specific set of criteria that determine what "gifted" is.

U.S. Department of Education Definitions

Perhaps one of the best examples of a functional definition of "gifted and talented" can be found in those offered by the United States Department of Education. The original definition by the USDOE in 1972 read as follows (Marland):

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.
> Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential in any of the following areas:
>
> 1. General intellectual ability
> 2. Specific academic aptitude
> 3. Creative or productive thinking
> 4. Leadership ability
> 5. Visual and performing arts
> 6. Psychomotor ability

This definition, as Davis and Rimm (1998) point out, is important as it "recognizes not only high general intelligence, but gifts in specific academic areas and in the arts" (18). It is also important to note that this definition provides two goals for gifted education: to develop talented students to their full potential and to provide society with its future professionals and leaders. The 1972 USDOE definition also takes both demonstrated talent and potential ability into consideration when determining giftedness.

In 1978 and 1988, the USDOE revised the original definition into much shorter versions that eliminated "psychomotor ability." It was felt that athletically talented students were already provided for outside of the normal school curriculum through athletic programs. Those students who are gifted in the artistic psychomotor areas (dance, pantomime, etc.) were felt to be covered by the performing arts category of giftedness.

Triarchic Definition of Giftedness

Robert J. Sternberg, of Yale University, offers a definition that, like that of the USDOE, views giftedness as a multi-dimensional construct. Sternberg's Triarchic Definition (1997) recognizes three central loci of giftedness: analytical, synthetic, and practical abilities. Sternberg's definition holds that individuals may be gifted in one or more of these different areas and fall under the term "gifted and talented."

Analytical giftedness is characterized by the ability to identify a problem, dissect that problem, and understand its parts. A high degree of logical reasoning is evident in those who are gifted in this particular area. Traditional tests of intelligence, such as the Stanford-Binet IQ test, are very good at identifying people who excel in this area of giftedness. Davis and Rimm (1998) describe Sternberg's favorite example of Alice, a woman who was very gifted in the area of

analytical thinking. While she was incredibly talented at taking tests and getting good grades in class, she had a very difficult time thinking of ideas on her own.

Synthetic giftedness is seen by Sternberg as the ability to "think outside of the box." Individuals who have a high level of synthetic giftedness may not score the highest on traditional IQ exams, but they are very adept at adapting to new and novel situations, creating new ideas, and at approaching problems from a different direction than others. Sternberg uses the example of a woman named Barbara, who, despite her poor test scores, was a very capable individual when it came to create new ideas for research.

The final type of giftedness in Sternberg's theory is practical giftedness. Practical giftedness, according to Sternberg, involves taking the abilities that one possesses, and utilizing them to succeed in everyday situations. These people are very talented at entering a new situation, discovering what needs to be done, and doing it to a high level of achievement. Sternberg's example in this case was Celia, who was neither as analytically or synthetically talented as Alice or Barbara, but could use what skills she had to her advantage in almost any situation.

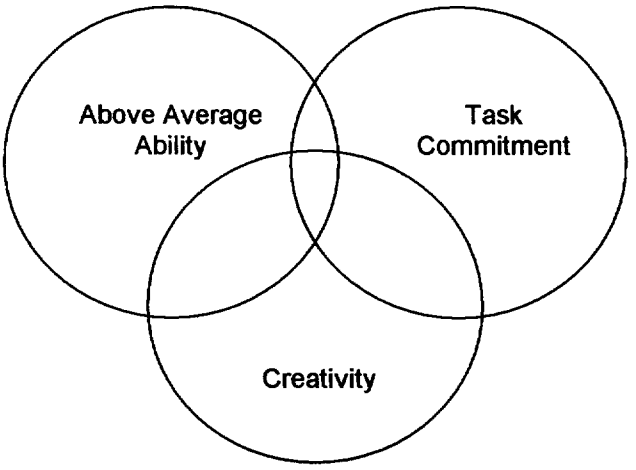
What impact does this theory have in the music education classroom? Teachers of music will often find that they have students that fit into one of Sternberg's three forms of giftedness. Some students are very good at recognizing chords of music, analyzing passages of music, and learning about famous composers, thus demonstrating a high level of analytical ability. Other students will be extremely good at musical composition, jazz improvisation, and finding new ways to spur their musical development, and could be said to have a high degree of synthetic giftedness. And still other students will not be as talented as others in terms of analysis or creativity, but will consistently be the first chair of their section, the soloist in a choir, or score

well on theory exams; these students can be said to have practical giftedness. It is up to the individual music educator to determine which, if not all, of these forms of giftedness, are to be recognized by his or her definition of musical giftedness.

Renzulli's Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness

In her book *Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom*, Beverly Parke (1989) describes yet another way to define giftedness that has been proposed by J. S. Renzulli. Renzulli believes that giftedness is the result of a convergence of three separate and distinct factors. These factors include: above average ability, creativity, and task commitment.

Diagram: Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness



Source: B. N. Parke (1989). *Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 8.

As you can see in the diagram above, Renzulli holds that giftedness is present when an individual demonstrates high levels in all three of the areas he mentions. This definition is important because it takes into account motivation as one of the prime indicators of giftedness.

This definition is valuable to the music educator because it helps delineate the total gifted musician. A student who is a talented performer, creative composer, and hard worker is identified by this definition as truly gifted. Unfortunately, not all students are gifted in all three

areas. Some music students may excel at performance, but are lazy and unmotivated. This should not exclude them from our definition of gifted and talented, but rather point to an area that needs to be improved for that student to reach his or her full potential.

General Giftedness vs. Specific Giftedness:
A Multiple Intelligences Perspective

Howard Gardner presents another view of defining giftedness in his book *Frames of Mind* (1983), in which he elucidated his theory of multiple intelligences. This theory, like Sternberg's Triarchic Theory, is in direct opposition to the notion that there is one central measure of intelligence, such as an IQ score. Instead, Gardner advocates the notion that there are instead many different forms of intelligence and that every individual learner is stronger in some areas than in others. One of the areas that Gardner identifies is that of musical intelligence. Musical intelligence, according to Gardner, is defined by "pitch discrimination; the ability to hear themes in music; sensitivity to rhythm, texture, and timbre; and...the production of music through performance or composition" (Ramos-Ford and Gardner 1997, 56). Obviously, the musically gifted student is one who exhibits these characteristics at a higher level than other students.

It is important for the music educator to recognize the existence of the many different types of "giftedness." For example, it is not always true that a student who excels at other classes will achieve at a high level in the music classroom. The music teacher must be able and ready to include students who may be poor performers in other subject areas within his or her definition of gifted and talented. Only by including this viewpoint can we accurately construct a definition of the musically gifted student.

Conclusion

What constitutes a musically gifted student? Obviously, there are no clear answers as to what exactly designates an individual music student as "gifted." Rather, it is up to each individual music educator to determine their own definition based on the resources they have available to run their gifted program. Each definition must be tailored to the particular program in which it is applied. Once the exact nature of the definition is determined, it is then possible to begin identifying which students can be considered gifted and putting into practice some methods for developing the talents of those students.

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Chapter Three:

Identifying the Gifted Music Student

Introduction

Once a definition of what "musical giftedness" has been arrived at, it is the music educator's duty to identify those students that fit that definition and are in need of special services. This chapter will seek to highlight several of the different methods that can be used by the music teacher to identify the gifted students in his or her classroom.

Arguments Against Identification

When identifying the gifted students in your classroom, a teacher must be prepared for the controversy and argument that surround selection procedures. As Davis and Rimm (1998) point out, an educator must expect criticism that ranges from "Why isn't my child considered gifted?" to "Don't you dare think about labeling my child as gifted." Torrance and Sisk (1997) claim that "many people strongly oppose the identification of giftedness and talent in children" (25). They point out that many people believe that identifying an individual as "gifted" is detrimental to that student, but some also believe that it damages those who are not identified. These arguments also claim that gifted students will emerge as talents no matter what their environment. These critics believe that the process of identification should be discarded and all teachers should teach to the middle of the class.

Torrance and Sisk (1992) counter the claims of those against identification by citing their own observations and studies. In one longitudinal study, Torrance and Sisk claim to have "seen children in the process of sacrificing...what promised to be great creative talents" (26). Instead, those children ultimately choose different paths, the best of which is a life of mediocrity, the worst of which is a life of delinquency. If these students were identified and given proper instruction, who knows what contributions they could have made to society? Obviously, if we

fail to identify those students with extraordinary abilities, we not only deny them, but society as well, of their particular talents.

Underlying Principles of Identification

Although identification procedures will differ from situation to situation, it is important that a certain set of principles form the foundation of any gifted identification test. Davis and Rimm (1998) offer a set of five principles that should always be present in a gifted identification system:

1. *Advocacy*. Identification should be designed in the best interests of all students.
2. *Defensibility*. Procedures should be based on the best available research and recommendations.
3. *Equity*. Procedures should guarantee that no one is overlooked (e.g., disadvantaged children).
4. *Pluralism*. The broadest possible definition of giftedness should be adopted.
5. *Comprehensiveness*. As many gifted learners as possible should be identified and served.

All of the tests and criteria that are used in the identification of a gifted music student should be compared to these five principles and scrapped if they do not fit. Davis and Rimm also point out that identification procedures must have a high degree of reliability (the consistency of the test) and validity (the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure).

Another important principle of gifted identification is that "the basis for identifying giftedness and talent should be relevant to the nature of the educational program provided for them" (Torrance and Sisk 1997). If the program cannot nurture the talents of those students who are identified, then identification is useless. For instance, it would be pointless to identify students who are exceptionally creative in the realm of composition if your gifted program is going to center around vocal performance. Those students will not necessarily thrive in that

environment, so it is essential to match the identification procedures with the program that the students will be introduced into.

Fundamental Characteristics

Identification of the gifted begins with those basic characteristics that differentiate the advanced learner from others. VanTassel-Baska (1988) points out that three fundamental differences between typical learners and talented learners exist:

1. The capacity to learn at faster rates.
2. The capacity to find, solve, and act on problems more readily.
3. The capacity to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections.

Identification procedures will generally seek to determine whether or not a particular student exhibits any one of these three characteristics in a particular area of learning.

It is important to remember that individuals will vary greatly in their precocity within these three areas. The important issue, according to VanTassel-Baska, is that "not all gifted students are alike in respect to their characteristics or needs" (55). Responding to these differences are the job of the classroom teacher, who must tailor his or her program to fit those individual strengths and weaknesses.

Schmidt's Three Areas

Carol Richardson (1990) cites Lloyd Schmidt, a music consultant to the Connecticut Department of Education, with identifying three different skill areas that should be considered when identifying the musically gifted. Those three areas are performance skills, creative ability (such as composition and improvisation), and verbal/musical perception skills. As far as identification procedures, Schmidt advises three separate evaluation procedures for each of the skills: a performance audition, a sample of student composition, and a sample of student writing

on a musical topic. It is also important to mention that Schmidt insists that identification should not only pinpoint those students who demonstrate the abilities, but those that have the potential to develop those abilities.

Formal and Informal Identification Procedures

There are two main types of identification procedures: formal and informal. Formal procedures are objective tests, like the Stanford-Binet IQ test, while informal procedures are subjective observations, generally from teachers, peers, parents, and others closely associated with the student. In the next several sections, we will highlight a number of both formal and informal identification procedures.

Musical Achievement Tests

One of the formal methods that can be used to identify giftedness is the musical achievement test. These tests are generally designed to uncover and measure a student's potential for success in music (Richardson 1990). These tests frequently do not require any knowledge of music, and are most effective on younger students (Uszler 1992). Richardson points out that most of these tests measure particular musical skills including, "pitch discrimination, tonal memory, rhythmic memory, chord analysis, and musical sensitivity."

Some Musical Aptitude Tests

Arnold Bentley, *Measures of Musical Ability* (London: George G. Garrap and Co., Ltd., 1966.)

Edwin Gordon, *Musical Aptitude Profile* (Chicago, IL: Riverside Press, 1965.)

Edwin Gordon, *Primary Measures of Music Audiation* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 1979.)

Edwin Gordon, *Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 1982.)

Edwin Gordon, *Iowa Tests of Music Literacy* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 1967).

Four of the most commonly used tests are Bentley's *Measures of Musical Ability* and Gordon's *Musical Aptitude Profile, Primary Measures of Music Audiation (PMMA), and*

Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation (IMMA). The *PMMA* is a diagnostic tool for measuring the musical ability of children ages 5 through 8, while the *IMMA* is designed to be used with students aged 6 to 9 who scored well on the *PMMA*. According to Uszler, those students who achieve high scores on these tests are considered "auditory conservers" and are likely to develop exceptional musical talents.

Richardson (1990) points out that teachers who administer these tests find, much to their surprise, that there are many students who score well, but do not show any interest in music. It is for this simple fact alone that these tests are valuable, as they can identify those students with high ability levels that would otherwise go unnoticed in the classroom. It is important to remember, however, that these tests have no way of measuring certain musical behaviors, especially motivation, and therefore cannot be used as the sole means for identifying gifted music students. It is best to use these tests in conjunction with other identification methods as a preliminary screening device for younger students wishing to begin a gifted music program.

Creativity Tests

Another form of formal identification is the creativity test, which seeks to measure divergent thinking. Unlike convergent thinking, which is mostly related to recall of fact and logic processes, divergent thinking is much more ambiguous and results in more original answers. An example of a convergent question would be: "What are the notes in an F Major chord?" The answer to this question would involve simply recalling how to spell the three notes of that chord. A divergent question, on the other hand, could be: "How would you improvise this solo to sound angry?" It is important to measure divergent thinking because, as Uszler (1992)

points out, "autonomy and divergence are characteristic of the arts; exploratory discovery may lead to unique performing interpretations as well as to original composition" (69).

Torrance and Sisk (1997) offer a few suggestions for testing for creative ability within the classroom. Some of these suggestions include:

- Give students autonomy to plan and make decisions on their own. Observe which children are most dependent on others and which are largely self-guided.
- Ask students to solve complex issues and observe which students take a positive approach to finding a solution as opposed to those who give up on the problems as unsolvable. Creatively gifted students will often "stick with" difficult problems.
- Hold brain-storming sessions to see which students come up with the most ideas. Also observe which students create the most controversial ideas, but are willing to hold their ground, even in the face of criticism.
- Ask students to complete a task with a minimum of materials. Observe which students are the most resourceful at completing the task, even with a lack of resources.

These are just a few of the ways in which creativity can be informally measured in the classroom. Creativity tests build upon these basic ideas to create a formal method for determining the creativity level of students. The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, constructed by E. Paul Torrance in 1966, measure a child's creativity using the above situations as a basis.

There are a few tests of creative ability that are specific to the area of music education. Webster's *Measures of Creative Thinking in Music* tests designed for children ages 6 to 10 and measures the student's musical extensiveness, flexibility, originality, and syntax (Richardson 1990). Some activities on the test include using a Nerf ball and a keyboard to simulate a rainstorm, vocal improvisation, and the creation of call-and-response patterns on temple blocks. Another test, Wang's *Measures of Creativity*, which is intended for use with children ages three through eight, claims to measure musical fluency and imagination. Some of the activities of this test include the imitation of events described by the teacher, the improvisation of ostinatos on a

keyboard instrument, and the movement of the student to six selections of music. Both of these tests are unpublished, but further information can be obtained from the addresses below.

Creativity Tests

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Wang, Cecilia. *Measures of Creativity in Sound and Music.* Unpublished manuscript (1985), 2. Available from Cecilia Wang, School of Music, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506.

Webster, Peter R. *Measures of Creative Thinking in Music: Administrative Guidelines.* Unpublished manuscript (1989), 6-8. Available from Peter R. Webster, School of Music, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 60201.

Teacher Observation/Nomination

One of the most reliable sources of information that can lead to the identification of a gifted music student is that student's teachers, particularly those involved in teaching the primary and intermediate grades where a great deal of musical development occurs. Teachers get to see students on a regular basis and are in an excellent position to grade an individual's achievement within the realm of music. To this end, one way of informally identifying the musically gifted and talented is through checklists and surveys that are completed by a student's former music teachers. Also useful in identifying the creatively gifted are checklists distributed to other subject-area teachers.

Merle B. Karnes is one researcher that has developed a system for identifying talented students in primary and intermediate grades (Richardson 1990). The system involves a nine-point checklist that is clear, concise, and easily adaptable to whatever situation it is applied in. Karnes' checklist states that a musically gifted and talented child:

- shows unusually high interest in music activities
- responds sensitively to the mood or character of music
- repeats short rhythmic patterns with ease

- sings in tune or very nearly in tune
- identifies familiar songs from the rhythm alone
- sings on the same pitch as a model (within the child's natural range)
- identifies the higher or lower of two tones
- identifies two short melodies as the same or different

These characteristics can simply be put in the form of a checklist and given to teachers, or those teachers that wish to measure them in a more quantitative measure could develop their own test of each attribute.

Closely related to Karnes' checklist are interest inventories, which are lists of behavioral characteristics associated with advanced music students. These lists can be given to teachers (as well as parents and peers), who then observe the student for the characteristics listed. Two such interest inventories are presented on the following pages. The first, Elam's *Music Teacher Checklist*, is applicable to any student in grades one through twelve, and is scored on a scale of zero, one, or two points for each characteristic. The second, Meeker's *Characteristics of Musically Talented Children*, is intended to be used with students in grades one through six, and is simply scored on the presence or absence of each characteristic trait. It is important to note that the authors of each interest inventory do not give any certain score as a cut-off for gifted and talented consideration. Rather, it is up to each individual teacher to determine what score on the test should be considered above normal.

Another similar checklist is available for identifying creative children, who, as we have mentioned before, will likely thrive in an artistic environment. This list, Torrance's *Ideal Pupil Checklist* (1975), states that creative children possess these fifteen characteristics:

1. They are adventurous
2. They test limits, frequently ask questions about puzzling things, want to know, attempt difficult tasks, and become preoccupied with them.
3. They are courageous in their convictions, curious and always searching, determined, and unflinching.
4. They feel and express their emotions strongly, are emotionally aware, and sensitive.

ELAM'S MUSIC TEACHER CHECKLIST (FOR GRADES 1 –12)

For each item the teacher is to respond in one of four ways: below normal expectations = 0 point; average expectations = 1 point; above normal expectations = 2 points; not observed = 0 points.

THE STUDENT...	POINTS
1. Demonstrates strong interest in music	
2. Demonstrates understanding of the concepts of music	
3. Discriminates pitches, dynamics, tempo, tone color, form, and harmonic changes	
4. Creates original rhythmic and melodic patterns	
5. Makes up songs and creates verses to songs	
6. Expresses feelings and emotions through music creatively	
7. Shows interest in performing	
8. Shows confidence in performance	
9. Is persistent in new learnings	
10. Studies music privately and performs in recitals	
TOTAL	

MEEKER'S CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSICALLY TALENTED CHILDREN
GRADES ONE THROUGH SIX

Teachers should place a check to the leftof the number if the listed characteristic is present in the student being evaluated. Present characteristics receive one point, absent characteristics no points.

1. Spontaneous response to rhythm and music
2. Love for singing familiar and made-up songs
3. Relative or absolute pitch and strong feeling for tonality
4. Highly developed ear and ability to associate pitch with visual symbols
5. Interest and skill in singing descants or other harmony parts
6. Remarkable memory and ever-expanding repertoire
7. Ability to identify familiar melodies on tonal instruments
8. Marked aptitude for playing introductions, accompaniments
9. Choice of music as a means of expressing feelings and experiences
10. Creative flair for improvisation and signs of ability to compose
11. Special interest in musical instruments and a desire to play an instrument
12. Voluntary involvement with music and a high interest in learning about music
13. Notable skill in performing on one or more musical instrument
14. Great enjoyment in listening to both live and recorded music
15. Natural sense of aesthetic values (beauty, order, form)
16. Keen power of attention, auditory discrimination, and evaluation
17. Quickness in discriminating among identical, similar, and contrasting phrases in songs an sections of longer musical compositions
18. Sensitivity to the communicative power of music, even to the slightest changes in tempo, dynamics, and tone color
19. Ability to hear, identify, and follow two or more rhythm patterns, metric groupings, or melodic themes played simultaneously
20. Perception and understanding of the subtle interrelationships within and among the constituent and expressive elements of music.

TOTAL: _____

5. They are energetic and virtuous.
6. The often guess or make hypotheses.
7. They exhibit independence in their thinking and judgement, and are industrious or busy, intuitive or insightful.
8. They like working alone, are always interested, persistent, or perservering, preferring complex tasks.
9. Occasionally, they regress, become playful and childlike.
10. They remember well, are assertive, confident, initiatory in acts, and self-sufficient.
11. They have a sense of beauty and a sense of humor.
12. They are sincere and earnest, striving for distant goals.
13. They are thorough and exhaustive, truthful even when it hurts, unwilling to accept things just because others say so.
14. They are visionary and idealistic.
15. They are willing to take risks.

These characteristics are easily adaptable to a format that can be sent to teachers of any subject area in order to help identify those creatively gifted students who may flourish in the area of the arts. This form of identification is especially important in a music program that emphasizes such areas as musical composition and improvisation.

Peer and Self-Nominations

Two other important sources for the identification of musically gifted and talented students are their own peers and the students themselves. Peer nominations are important, because, as Beverly Parke (1989) points out, "students know who the 'bright' students are...[they] have a fairly accurate notion of where they stand in relationship to their classmates in matters of academic, social, and physical abilities." Music teachers will often note that the students in the clarinet section know who the best performer is, that students in a music theory class know who writes the most creative compositions, and that students in a music appreciation class know which other students have the most insightful comments when analyzing music.

Because of this special relationship that students have with their peers, it is important to use their observations when identifying gifted students. This can be accomplished through the use of peer nomination forms, which are relatively easy to construct. The creation of such forms require three important considerations by the teacher constructing them (Davis and Rimm 1998). The first consideration should be the characteristics that you wish to identify with the nomination forms. In a musical classroom, these characteristics will often center around performance ability, creativity, and musical characteristics, such as audiation. The second consideration should be grade level, since the responses of the students will vary according to their age. Davis and Rimm point out that research has shown that peer nominations of children below fourth grade are highly inaccurate, and that peer nomination should largely be done in grade five and above. The final consideration is the style of the peer nomination form. Questions can be *direct* ("Who is the best singer in your class?"), they can be *disguised* ("If Mozart visited our class, whose composition would he like the most?"), or in the form of a game ("I am thinking of one member of this class who is a great soloist. Who is it?"). The following page has an example of an 8th grade peer nomination form that utilizes these three question styles.

Davidson (1986) suggests a different approach to peer nominations for students of a more advanced age and maturity. A form that simply says:

> *I believe that* _____ *should be placed in the gifted program because I have observed the following behaviors:* _____.

will allow greater freedom for students to identify others with exceptional abilities. As Davidson states, this type of form "eliminates the possibility that a student may be excluded simply because some unique abilities may not be included on a standard nomination form" (212).

Self-nominations are very similar in form to peer-nominations, and can be very good at determining motivation, as well as other factors. Richardson (1990) emphasizes that self-

PEER NOMINATION FORM
EIGHTH GRADE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Think about your classmates. Read the questions below. In each space write the name of a classmate who best fits the description provided. You may write a name more than once and you may write your own name if it fits. Always be sure to pick someone who is the best choice and not just someone who is your friend.

1. Who is the best musician in your class? _____
2. If you could pick one person to play a solo on the next concert, who would it be? _____
3. If you were having trouble with a difficult rhythm, who would you ask to count it out for you? _____
4. Who is the best leader in the class? _____
5. If the teacher asks a question, who is most likely to answer the fastest? _____
6. Who is the most exciting person in class? _____
7. Who has the best imagination? _____
8. If the class was to visit the city orchestra, who would most likely be asked to play with the symphony? _____
9. Who is the most organized student in your class? _____
10. If the class was visited by a famous composer, who would ask the most questions? _____
11. If the teacher was gone for a day, which student would volunteer to take over the class? _____

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

nominations are especially useful in high school settings, while Renzulli (1984) stated that in high school, the only identification method he recommends is self-nomination. Self-nomination is especially useful in discovering students that have a strong desire to participate in a special program, but are too introverted to seek inclusion in the program.

What types of questions should be asked on a self-nomination form? Davis and Rimm (1998) suggest asking the student outright what areas they feel that they excel in, and ask the students to provide evidence of that superior achievement. Richardson (1990) uses self-nomination to determine motivational factors, and as such, asks questions such as "Why do you want to be considered for the program?" and "What opportunities do you believe the program will provide?" Piirto (1994) would ask questions about how a student spends his or her leisure time, since research shows that what a student does outside of school is often a great indicator of where they will be successful in school. The following page contains a sample self-nomination form that takes these various factors into consideration.

One final form of self-nomination for secondary-level students that is suggested by Richardson (1990) is the use of a simple essay format. In one essay, a teacher can gauge the music student's level of motivation, previous achievement, and self-knowledge. One possible essay prompt provided by Richardson is:

> Describe either in writing on a separate piece of paper or on standard cassette tape what you do in the arts and in leadership activities either in or out of school. Include ideas, experiences, and ways you express and develop your talents, as well as lessons you have taken. Describe your commitment to the arts (44).

Utilizing the responses to this prompt, a teacher can determine which students will most likely fit into the gifted and talented plan that they have created.

SELF-EVALUATION FORM
FOR THE MUSICALLY GIFTED PROGRAM

Please consider the following questions very carefully. Respond to them on this form or on a separate sheet of paper. Answer all questions to the best of your ability and in a truthful manner.

Why do you wish to be considered for a program for exceptional music students?

What opportunities can this program provide for you?

Please list your individual strengths and weaknesses in the area of music.

What are your typical leisure activities outside of school? What do you do for fun?

If asked, how would your friends describe you?

Auditions and Performance Testing

Perhaps the most useful identification procedure that can be implemented in the choral or instrumental classroom is that of the live audition. This form of identification is likely the one that most music educators are familiar with (Richardson 1990). If used properly, this method can be very successful at uncovering talent within a music performance class, such as choir, orchestra, or band. An evaluation sheet, like the one presented on page 43, can be very useful in identifying the level of performance of an individual student in an audition. Those students who score extremely well on this audition form should be considered for gifted education.

Uszler (1992) warns about some of the dangers of solely relying on audition information for the identification of gifted and talented students:

> As every music teacher knows...the audition can identify only certain musical behaviors. It may not reveal that the student was overprepared or externally indoctrinated. Moreover, it cannot uncover the student's ability to concentrate, self-initiate, or perservere – all traits generally understood to be part of what constitutes giftedness, particularly in the sense of lasting success (70).

Uszler suggests that audition procedures incorporate some activities that test these other factors not usually measured in the audition, such as ear-training exercises. Without examining other facets of a student's musical ability, auditions can never accurately judge whether or not a student should be included in a gifted education program.

Teachers can also use other ways of evaluating a student's performance beyond the audition. These methods include the examination of a portfolio of student products (compositions, recorded performance, written work, etc.), observing the student in a classroom setting, or a teacher-student interview. Of these, the student teacher interview is possibly the best indicator of success, since the evaluator can easily judge a student's personality and motivation in a one-on-one setting.

MUSICAL AUDITION ASSESSMENT
for High School Instrumental Students

Circle the appropriate number (1-5) for each individual aspect of the student's performance. A rating of 1 indicates "poor," while a rating of 5 indicates "exceptional."

Prepared Piece

Tone quality and intonation	1	2	3	4	5
Fluency and dexterity of technique	1	2	3	4	5
Rhythmic accuracy and tempo	1	2	3	4	5
Articulation	1	2	3	4	5
Phrasing and tonal shading	1	2	3	4	5
Dynamics	1	2	3	4	5
Presentation (posture/holding position)	1	2	3	4	5
Scales	1	2	3	4	5
Sight-Reading	1	2	3	4	5

Totals:

Prepared Piece _____

Scales _____

Sight-Reading _____

Student Name: _____

Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Building an Assessment System

All of the previous methods of identification are important components of building a pool of candidates for a gifted and talented program. Clasen and Clasen (1987) state that it is important to include testing data, performance data, and developmental data to create a group of students that will be considered for the gifted program. Torrance and Sisk (1997) state that it is very important that the identification procedures and rationale used by the classroom teacher match the type of program that the students will be involved in. Therefore, we must selectively use certain forms of identification when they are most relevant to our own situation in order to assure a better match for students.

Parke (1989) suggests that teachers develop a plan for assessing students that includes two primary steps: screening and identification. In the screening phase, a large number of prospective students are assessed using one or more of the previously mentioned identification strategies. The screening phase should eliminate a fairly large percentage of students, but should also still include as many as possible. In the identification phase, those students who will be included in the gifted program are identified. The number of students selected in this phase is largely dependent upon class size, teacher preference, and/or funding level. This final phase should be highly selective, aiming to pick only those students who will benefit the most from a gifted and talented program.

On the following page is a sample assessment plan for students moving out of a middle school to the high school level. In this assessment plan, performing ability is the single most important determining factor, as the program that the students will enter places a large emphasis on performance. A program that had more emphasis on composition or improvisation would likely use different methods to identify students, such as Torrance's creative ability tests. It is up

to the individual teacher to decide how much weight each test carries, although in this case certain tests are given much more priority over others, with the greatest emphasis being placed upon the student's formal performing audition. Again, a composition program would likely place more emphasis on a portfolio examination than a performing audition. Each individual program assessment plan is left to the discretion of the teacher in charge of the program, as he or she knows the program best.

ASSESSMENT PLAN:
VOCAL MUSIC PROGRAM

Purpose: To identify eighth grade choral students for an advanced vocal music class.

Assessment Step	**Procedure/Testing Instrument**
Screening	*Measures of Music Ability Test* (25%) Music Teacher Nominations (50%) Self-Evaluation Forms (25%)
Identification	Performance audition (70%) Student interview (30%)

Goal: To identify the 25 students entering the high school who will benefit the most from a special vocal music ensemble for gifted and talented students.

Conclusion

As you can see, the identification of gifted and talented students in the music classroom is an important and intensive step in the education of those students. Careful planning is required in order to choose methods that will most accurately determine which students need the services of a gifted program. Identification procedures must also match the type of program that students will be entering into, or else those students may not succeed in the gifted and talented environment. In all, it is of the utmost importance for a teacher to develop a sound system of identification before proceeding to the next step of instructing gifted students.

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Chapter Four:

Teaching the Gifted Music Student

Introduction

After the difficult step of identifying those students within a program that can be considered "gifted and talented," the final task of the music educator is to develop and implement instructional practices that will aid in the development of those individuals. These practices may be varying in their scope; some teachers may wish to develop a full curriculum for their gifted and talented students, while others may seek to utilize some of these techniques periodically as an extension of an already-developed music curriculum.

The most important aspect to consider when developing teaching strategies is the students who will be taught. An educator must consider what is best for the student, not what is best for the teacher. As Torrance and Sisk (1997) point out, a teacher must seek to develop the outstanding talent within a student, not to simply create a well-rounded individual. He describes this situation as "an effort to make flying monkeys abandon such antics" and "make silent lions roar." Instead, Torrance says that we must use different tactics, "encouraging the 'monkeys to fly' and 'permitting the silent lion to keep silent'" and capitalize upon abilities besides roaring.

In the following chapter, we will examine a wide range of teaching techniques that are useful for developing the individual talents of gifted students. Both general and specific techniques will be presented and discussed, while several examples will also be provided. Please be aware, however, that this is not an exhaustive list and that many other educational techniques exist that are not mentioned here.

Acceleration, Grouping, and Enrichment

Gifted and talented education has traditionally fallen into one of three general types: acceleration, grouping, and enrichment (Uszler 1992). Each of these types has a different effect on the education of gifted students, and each can only be utilized in certain situations. Acceleration and grouping are difficult for music educators to implement, while enrichment is one of the best ways to help tailor the music curriculum to individual learner's needs.

Acceleration generally seeks to meet gifted student's needs by providing them access to materials and instruction that is usually limited to older students. Some strategies in acceleration include: early admission, grade/subject skipping, credit by examination, telescoped programs, and advanced placement courses (Uszler 1992). Acceleration strategies for gifted education can only be used in situations where a sequential course of study is already in place, thus making them difficult to apply in a musical classroom, which is generally less structured than the general classroom. For example, it is difficult to accelerate a ninth grade student in a high school choir that only has one choir, as there is no way for that student to "move up the ladder."

Some acceleration strategies are applicable to (and practiced in) many music programs with positive results for the students (Torrance and Sisk 1997). It is possible to devise a program where a student from a lower grade participates in music instruction at a higher grade; for example, a talented middle school student may spend one period a day at the high school playing with the orchestra. This practice is also applicable when a teacher has the ability to place a younger student in the school's top ensembles. In a studio situation, acceleration takes the form of giving the student more challenging pieces to play and perform. However, as Uszler (1992), points out, "the pitfalls of this strategy may be...the overtaxation of the playing apparatus itself" (71). This overtaxation can result from the presence of facility, but a lack of sensitivity and

subtlety on a performance medium. It can also result from an overwhelming pressure to reach further in order to succeed.

Like acceleration, grouping based upon ability is an educational strategy that is already used to a great extent in music education. Many music programs, particularly those that deal with multiple performing groups, use auditions and selection processes to determine which students are allowed to participate in the "top" ensemble, whether it be instrumental or choral. In these groups, students are given the opportunity to work with other students that are at relatively the same ability level and perform challenging works of music.

However, even within these groups, there still remains a wide range of diversity. Uszler (1992) points to the studio education as the prototypical "separate education" that gifted music students receive. In this environment, the individual student can thrive under the guidance of a devoted professional, "the only proper guide for such a student" (71). Uszler does warn, however, that a youngster given such instruction can start to lose hold of reality, as "real life" passes them by while they focus on the mastery of a set of particular skills.

The definition of what constitutes "enrichment" of the curriculum is a topic of heavy debate among theorists (Torrance and Sisk 1997). However, most are in agreement that "enrichment" is any lateral expansion of the curriculum (as opposed to the vertical expansion of acceleration). Any activity which takes a normal class instructional procedure and modifies it for a gifted and talented learner falls under this category of gifted education. Torrance points out that there is not much research to demonstrate the effectiveness of this type of instruction, although he believes it to be the most effective of the typical three. Most of the strategies below fall under the heading of an enrichment activity.

Learning Environment Modifications

One way of modifying the curriculum for gifted and talented students is by changing their learning environment. Beverly Parke (1989) claims that it is student-centered learning environments are central to successful programs for the gifted. She lists five ways in which the learning and instructional procedures must be changed for gifted and talented students:

1. **The student is a partner in curricular decision making**. Since the students are ultimately responsible for their own learning, it is important to allow them options for how they spend all or part of their class time. Educators must "facilitate this by allowing [students] the opportunity to learn how to handle this process" (65).
2. **Seating patterns facilitate learning.** Do not keep students in the traditional classroom set-up. Allow them different opportunities for learning by moving them around. In a traditional ensemble, this means creating activities that allow students to move around or work in smaller group settings elsewhere in the classroom.
3. **There is activity and a reasonable amount of noise.** Students should be actively engaged in some form of activity, which will naturally result in a small amount of constructive noise.
4. **Individualized plans for learning are developed and executed**. Individual needs must be addressed within the gifted classroom. Plans should be developed that address the unique strengths and weaknesses of each student.
5. **Decisions are mutually made by the teacher and student when appropriate and possible.** This addresses the goal of teaching the students independence by allowing them to make important decisions that impact their education.

A classroom that incorporates these basic changes will be far more open for student learning. By giving students a hand in their own educational decisions, "student learning is more apt to take place in a way that will benefit the entire body of students" (67).

Differentiated Instruction

One of the most effective strategies for teaching gifted and talented students in a regular classroom is through the technique of differentiated instruction. According to Carol Ann Tomlinson (1995), differentiated instruction recognizes the fundamental fact that every individual student is not created equally, and has his or her own set of strengths and weaknesses. Differentiated instruction is easily adaptable to the music classroom, and can be particularly effective in performance ensembles.

Tomlinson offers the following view of the differentiated classroom:

> In a differentiated classroom, the teacher plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process, and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs (10).

The core of differentiating instruction in a classroom is identifying student differences and using them to create the flexible groupings that will be used for instruction. These groupings are fluid, meaning that they do not always remain the same, but change as the situation warrants. For example: one student may be highly interested in composition, and therefore placed in the advanced group for an electronic music project, but uninterested in improvisation, and placed in the beginning group for a improvised drum circle performance. The needs of gifted students will be met as they are placed in groups of their peers for the activities in which they excel.

The first step in creating a differentiated lesson is identifying and creating the groups that the students will be placed. Groups should generally be determined based on one of two factors: readiness and interest. The teacher can generally determine levels of readiness and/or interest through classroom observation of individual student behaviors. If desired, the teacher can choose to administer a formal assessment that more accurately determines readiness or interest levels. Differentiated lessons are not limited to the traditional "three-group" model, and should use whatever number of groups is proper for the lesson.

Once the groupings are determined, the next task of the teacher is to determine exactly what aspect of the curriculum he or she is going to differentiate. The three aspects most commonly differentiated are content, process, and product. While these three aspects of curriculum may seem to be separate, the reality is that they are often interrelated. As such, any particular lesson may differentiate one, two, or all three of these aspects of curriculum.

Content is defined as what we teach, and is probably the most likely aspect of curriculum to be differentiated in a lesson. The most likely approach when differentiating content is to assign different aspects of the same topic to the different groupings. This allows the entire class to learn about different facets of the same topic so that whole class activities can be mixed with the group activities. An example of content differentiation would be to have a class explore three key principles of the Baroque period: (1) the composers of the time, (2) counterpoint, and (3) the impact of religion on Baroque music. In assigning a different principle to each group, the teacher will be letting each group explore different content, but, if each group presents its product to the class, teaching the whole class about the same topic.

In differentiating the process of learning, the teacher uses several different learning strategies for each of the groupings. This can greatly help students who process information differently and engage better in different modes of learning. For example, a teacher may divide the class into two groups for a listening assignment. One group may draw a picture that represents the music, while the other group writes down adjectives that describe what they hear. Visual learners will obviously respond well to being in the first group, while those who excel at verbal communication will find their talents best utilized in the second group.

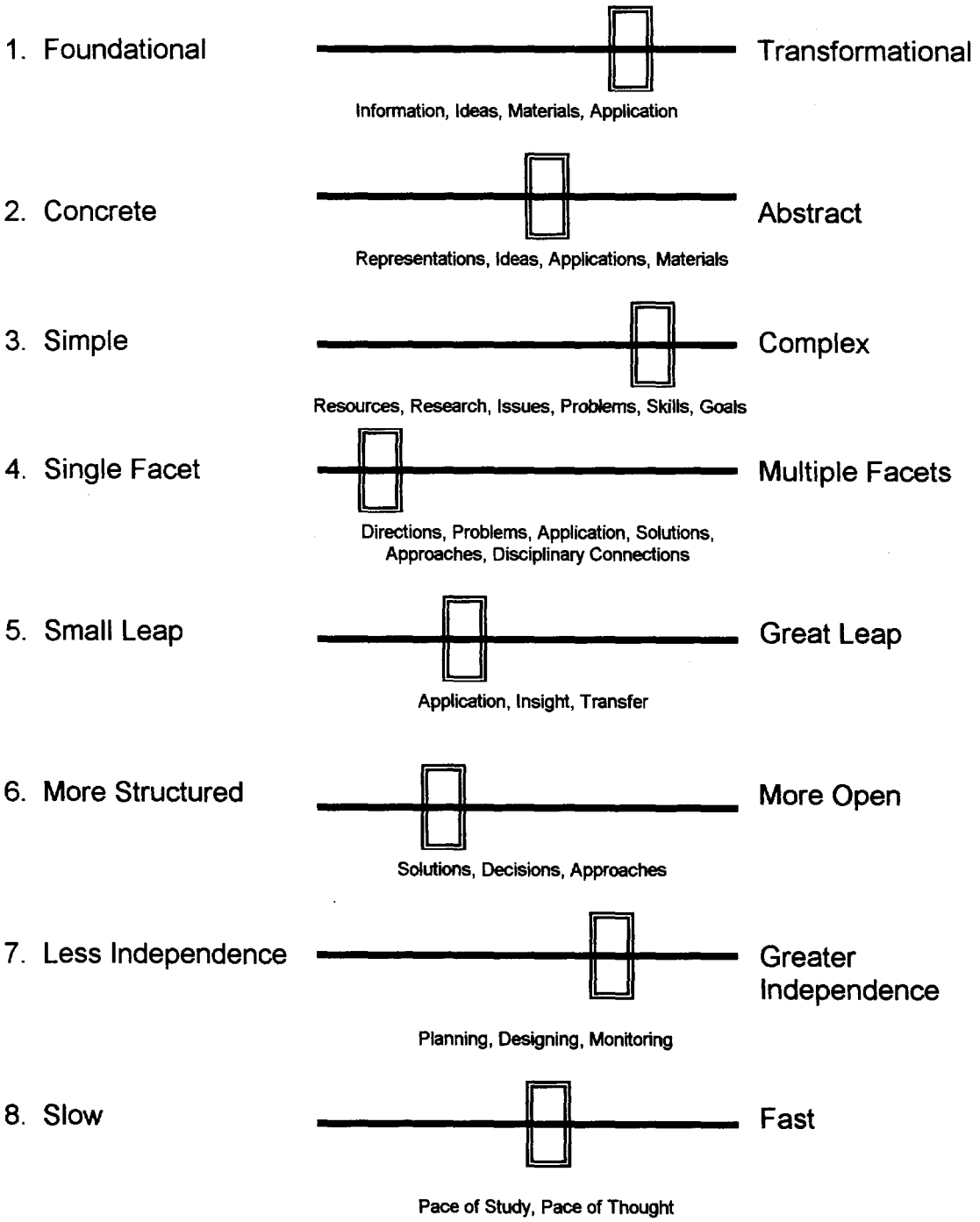
The final aspect of curriculum that can be differentiated is the product of student learning. This involves having each group create a different end product to display their mastery

of concepts. One example of differentiated curriculum would be having three groups, one who must create a video documentary based Stephen Sondheim's life, a second group who performs a short selection from 'West Side Story,' and a third group who composes a song in the style of Sondheim's early work. All three groups are working on the early music of Stephen Sondheim, but happen to be demonstrating their knowledge in a different way.

Once the teacher has determined which aspect of the curriculum he or she is going to differentiate, it is important to decide how that curriculum will be differentiated. For this purpose, Tomlinson has devised a tool that she terms "The Equalizer" (see figure on the next page). Like the equalizer on a stereo, a teacher who is differentiating a lesson can adjust the buttons to adjust for individual student needs. Advanced learners will require lessons that have more of the equalizer buttons to the right, while struggling learners will require the buttons to be on the left. An example of the use of the Equalizer would be to give the gifted and talented students in the class greater independence in their learning (i.e. they can design their own project) and giving those who struggle less independence (i.e. they must follow the teacher's plan for their project).

As you can see, differentiated instruction holds great promise for teaching the gifted and talented, especially in the regular classroom. Since the focus of this type of planning is largely student-centered, gifted and talented students can adapt the lesson to themselves, rather than vice versa. On the following pages you will find two examples of differentiated lesson plans, one for a general music class, and one for a secondary-level jazz band.

The Equalizer: A Tool for Planning Differentiated Lessons



from *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, Carol Ann Tomlinson, 40.

Differentiated Lesson Plan: Jazz Improvisation

Scenario: Mr. Example is the director of bands at a medium-sized suburban high school. While the school has always had a consistently well-performing concert band, the jazz band, a seventeen-member ensemble, frequently struggles, especially with the concept of improvisation. Often, Mr. Example must spend the majority of rehearsal time working on improvisation with the 10 to 12 students that find the concept very difficult to master. Recently, Mr. Example received complaints from Eddie, his top alto saxophone in the band, that several of the students in the band are bored and find the improvisation exercises too simple. Eddie claims that the students are considering transferring from jazz band to another class because of their frustration. Mr. Example recognizes that the five students that Eddie is talking about are the best performers in the group and looks for a way to accommodate their needs while still meeting the needs of the rest of the band.

Problem: Mr. Example has run headlong into a problem concerning the needs of gifted students in a regular classroom. He needs to find a way to teach the small number of students who excel at jazz improvisation while still teaching the whole class. Larger schools may solve this problem by having two or three jazz ensembles whose membership is determined by ability level (resulting in each ensemble being ability-grouped at roughly the same level). Mr. Example does not have this luxury, however, and must find a way to teach every one of his students in order to maximize their potential.

Solution: One solution to this problem is to create a differentiated lesson plan that accounts for the various ability levels in his ensemble. In this way, each student can receive the specific type of instruction that he or she needs, be it accelerated instruction, normal instruction, or remedial instruction.

The first step for Mr. Example is to assess and evaluate the ability level of each student in his class in terms of improvisational ability. This can be done one of two ways. Mr. Example can rely on his own observations and perform an *informal assessment* of the student's needs. More reliable, however, would be a *formal assessment* that accurately determines the student's needs through a rubric and a quantitative measurement. To do this, Mr. Example holds brief,

five minute auditions of improvisational ability after class with each member of his ensemble. To evaluate these auditions, he creates a scoring rubric and evaluation sheet.

The second step in the process is for Mr. Example to determine how many and what types of groupings he wants to use for his differentiated lesson plan. To this end, he decides to create four jazz combos from his current large ensemble. One combo will be for the advanced improvisers, two combos for the intermediate-level improvisers, and one combo for the beginner-level improvisers.

Mr. Example decides that he is going to differentiate the content of what each combo learns, and sketches out the following activities for each group:

COMBO ONE (ADVANCED) – This group will work together to prepare a performance of two pieces with difficult chord changes. They will be given the lead-sheets to Ellington's "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me" and "A Little Chicago Fire," by Frank Foster. This group will then be allowed to work independently, with the only condition that every combo member must play an improvised solo at some point.

COMBOS TWO AND THREE (INTERMEDIATE) – These groups will work on improvising over a basic blues pattern in a set key using Jamey Abersold recordings. Mr. Example's assistant director will oversee these two groups, monitoring them to make sure they are on task.

COMBO FOUR (REMEDIAL) – This group will work with Mr. Example on soloing over a single chord, in this case Cmin7. They will learn to spell the Cmin7 chord and the C dorian scale that they will use to improvise.

Assessment: Each group will perform for the entire group during the next class period. Mr. Example has decided to evaluate each group's performance with a rubric that emphasizes the aspects of improvisation that each group worked on in the lesson.

Differentiated Lesson Plan: Music Appreciation

Scenario: Miss Example noticed that in her last lesson, many students did not entirely grasp all of the concepts of Baroque opera that she taught. However, some students easily understood the concepts and were ready to move on to a new topic by the end of class. Rather than spend a whole class period reviewing for the students who had difficulty, or moving on at their expense, Miss Example decides to create a differentiated lesson plan that incorporates elements of the previous topic (Baroque opera) with that of the new topic, Classical-era opera.

Lesson Procedure: Miss Example devised the following procedure to follow during class:

1. Begin class with a 15-minute lecture (preferably with an audio-visual aid such as PowerPoint), giving basic background information on classical-era opera, including composer names, historical events, artistic movements, etc.
2. Pass out directed listening sheets to entire class.
3. Have entire class watch 10-minute clips of *La Serva Padrona* (pre-classical example) and *Don Giovanni* (classical example). While observing clips, students will fill out directed listening sheets to determine the characteristics of pre-classical and classical opera.
4. Divide class into three groups for activities (all activities will be given 40 minutes of work time).
    a. Group One – Students in this group first review Baroque opera with the teacher and will be given the videos viewed in class for review purposes. This group will be tasked with creating a Venn diagram (on posterboard) that compares and contrasts Baroque and Classical styles.
    (This activity is intended for students that found the previous day's work on Baroque opera difficult and challenging. The activity deals largely with foundational knowledge that is not overly complex, and even includes several opportunities to review critical ideas with the teacher's assistance. The activity is very structured, with clear instructions for the students that do not allow for a great deal of independence. This is also a good activity for those students who learn better in group work and promotes interpersonal interaction.)
    b. Group Two – Students in this group will each be given two sheets of sketch paper and will be asked to draw one picture that represents the characteristics of Baroque opera and one picture that represents the characteristics of Classical opera (i.e. the Baroque pictures should be bright and elaborate, while the Classical pictures are exact and well-structured).
    (This activity is intended for students who understood the previous lesson more than the first group. It is further above the foundational level of knowledge and requires a greater depth of thought to transfer the

characteristics of music to the medium of visual art. The activity is a little less structured and more independent, allowing each student to create their own picture with little teacher guidance. Students in this group are asked to take the concrete characteristics of music and apply it to the more abstract world of visual art.)

c. Group Three – Students in this group will be given the task of collectively writing and performing two songs: one that is indicative of Baroque opera and one that is typical of Classical opera. They will be given complete freedom to determine the topics of their songs and through what medium they will be performed. Each song must emphasize the differences between Baroque and Classical opera.
(This activity is intended for those students who are advanced learners that easily grasp the differences between the two types of musical theater. These students should also be those who have excelled at grasping previous musical concepts and have the ability to work with music in a theoretical sense. This activity is les structured than the others and calls for a great deal of independence for the group assigned to complete the task. The concepts are dealt with in a very abstract manner and are handled in a more complex manner by making the students apply them to their own creative processes.)

5. Allow each group to present its final products to the class for the final ten minutes.
6. Assign reading for the next concept (Wagnerian Opera), asking students to pay careful attention to the difference between Classical opera and the new type of opera they will be reading about.

Assessment: Miss Example decides that the best way to assess each individual student is to record the presentations, giving each student a copy to place in their portfolio, which will be assessed at the end of the term.

Curriculum Compacting

Reis, Burns, and Renzulli (1992) define "curriculum compacting" as a "procedure used to streamline the regular curriculum for students who are capable of mastering it at a faster pace" (5). Their principle rationale for the use of this teaching method is the fact that studies have shown that many (78-88%) students know much of their text's content before they "learn it" in the classroom. Parke (1989) states that there are three phases to curriculum compacting: assessment of individual skill levels, strategies to cover curriculum, and alternatives for enrichment and/or acceleration.

The first step in compacting is determining what level the individual students can perform at. This can be achieved through the use of various formal and informal measurement tools. Through these assessments, the teacher notes which particular skills each student has mastered (i.e. knowing more than 75% of the content). Students who are compacting are then exempt from whole class instruction in those areas and can spend that time working on enrichment activities and remedial work in their personal areas of weakness (Tomlinson 1995).

The second step of compacting involves determining which areas of the curriculum that the student has not covered and engaging in remedial activities (Reis, Burns, and Renzulli 1992). For this step, it is important to know the goals of the curriculum so that the compacting student will not be behind the rest of the class.

The final step of compacting involves the participation of the student in alternative study while the rest of the class works on general lessons. Usually, this involves the student and teacher agreeing on a topic of investigation, a timeline for that investigation, a product, and an assessment strategy that will be implemented at the end of the compacting. Since compacting is largely student-centered, it is best for the classroom teacher to allow the student to determine the

various characteristics of the investigation. It is important to note that students involved in compacting are not bound to the subject they compacted out of, and should be free to explore other avenues of learning that may hold more interest for them (Tomlinson 1995).

Curriculum compacting can be very easily applied to the music classroom. Take the example of a Billy, a student in the high school orchestra. Billy is a very talented viola player who has clearly progressed beyond the level of his peers. In his last playing exam, he played several selected excerpts from the upcoming concert with practically no errors. However, in class, he frequently has difficulty with his minor scales. Using these observations as an assessment, Billy's teacher decides that he would be greatly benefited by a compacted curriculum. To guide the compacting, Billy's teacher fills out "The Compactor" form (pictured on the following page). He determines that Billy does not need to work with the class on the repertoire for the upcoming concert, but should spend some time away from the class working on his minor scales, a skill which Billy must master to meet the curriculum guidelines. After Billy has mastered the minor scales, he and his teacher agree on an enrichment activity that will cater to Billy's main interests: composition and performance. They agree that the end product of the compacting will be an unaccompanied viola solo that Billy may play on the upcoming concert. Together, Billy and his teacher devise a rubric that will evaluate both the composition and the performance. As you can see, in this scenario, curriculum compacting allows Billy, who would otherwise waste his time in an ensemble rehearsal, to strengthen his weakness and explore his interests outside of the regular classroom.

Individual Educational Programming Guide

THE COMPACTOR

Name: _____ Age: _____ Teacher: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____ Parent(s): _____

Curriculum Areas to be Considered for Compacting Provide a brief description of basic material to be covered during this marking period and the assessment information or evidence that suggests the need for compacting.	***Procedures for Compacting Basic Material*** Describe activities that will be used to guarantee proficiency in basic curricular areas.	***Acceleration and/or Enrichment Activities*** Describe activities that will be used to provide advanced level learning experiences in each area of the regular curriculum.

Source: S. Reis, D. Burns, and J. Renzulli (1992), *Curriculum Compacting*. 74.

Mentoring Programs

One of the oldest forms of gifted education is that of the mentoring program. Clasen and Clasen (1997) describe mentoring as the interaction between an older expert and a talented younger individual in an area of mutual interest. Mentoring has existed since ancient times, as can be seen in the mentor-mentee relationships of Socrates and Plato, Plato and Aristotle, and Aristotle and Alexander the Great. Modern mentoring programs can be used to fill the gap of education that a school cannot cover with its own resources.

Torrance and Sisk (1997), relate the personal narrative of a young arts student, Robert, who is involved in a successful mentoring program:

> I've always been a ham and interested in acting, but I just didn't think I could make it. But since I've been at the Inner City Theater with Mr. Jones, I feel it is not only a possibility for me, but I am going to do it, I can act. I have had several parts and Mr. Jones has helped me believe in myself. I know that when I am reaching the audiences and when I am not. There is a feeling of realness that goes through me when I am on the stage, and it is wonderful...so wonderful that I can hardly explain it to anyone but Mr. Jones. He listens and never becomes angry with me when I forget a line. If my other teachers were like he is, I wouldn't have wasted as much time in school (137-138).

Obviously, Robert is being well trained by his mentor to pursue a professional acting career. The interactions between Robert and Mr. Jones could not be simulated in the regular school classroom. Torrance and Sisk relate four major advantages of a mentoring program such as Robert's: (1) students are provided with opportunities to learn beyond the limits of time, space, and curriculum, (2) students a provided access to resources and facilities not ordinarily available in schools, (3) students are provided with professional role models, and (4) mentorships stimulate career awareness and career options.

How can a teacher find appropriate mentors for his or her students? First, candidates must be experts within their fields, a characteristic easily verified by a check of experience and training (Torrance and Sisk 1997). In music, these individuals will generally be professional

performers or educators in the field. However, being an expert is not enough, as the mentor must also be willing and eager to share expertise with a novice student (Clasen and Clasen 1997). The mentor must also be patient, understanding, and willing to be flexible with a talent that is still developing and has not reached maturity. Mattson (1983) also includes the traits of strong personal integrity, optimism, and a sense of humor as characteristics of a good mentor.

Clasen and Clasen (1997) describe the role of the mentor as having six interconnected facets:

1. **Teacher**. As teacher, the mentor helps the mentee push the boundaries of knowledge and skills. The mentor provides systematic feedback on work and helps the novice analyze and evaluate progress and products.
2. **Expert**. The mentor has the ability and experience to create opportunities, to introduce the novice to an expert's view of a field, and to share traditional accumulated wisdom.
3. **Guide**. The mentor knows the path to success and the obstacles to reaching goals and shows the way while allowing for individual exploration.
4. **Advisor**. The mentor has advises the mentee regarding expectation and possibilities, introduces the mores and standards of the field, and helps in problem solving and decision making. As advisor, the mentor confronts the novice if behavior is inappropriate.
5. **Friend**. The mentor is a source of emotional support, someone the mentee can trust and with whom feelings can be shared.
6. **Role Model**. As a role model, the mentor becomes an exemplar of certain values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns that the mentee will often strive to emulate (220).

After identifying potential mentors, it is important for the teacher to ascertain which students that have been identified as gifted should be placed in the mentoring program. Clasen and Clasen (1997) state that it is important to carefully consider a student's readiness level before mentorship is initiated. They believe that "readiness involves possessing exceptional ability and potential to excel in a field, abiding interest and enthusiasm for an area of study, perseverance, and a willingness to commit time and energy to study and exploration. Commitment, in particular, is a prominent factor in evaluations of readiness" (220). Reilly

(1992) indicates that the following list of student characteristics should be considered when selecting students for the program:

- Motivated by challenges
- Creative
- Willing to work hard
- Looking for advanced learning
- Able to provide own transportation
- Willing to minimize outside of school work hours
- Willing to complete an application
- Acceptable to a screening committee
- Willing to complete a meaningful learning project

Generally, these characteristics can be determined from teacher observations, but a formal interview may also be helpful in selecting those students who will succeed in the mentor program.

Since a mentorship program may take place largely out of school, it is important for the classroom teacher to devise a method to monitor and assess student achievement within the program. Torrance and Sisk (1997) suggest that the simplest method of monitoring the mentorship is by keeping attendance records. They also suggest that the student provide weekly reports that detail their work with their mentor, or possibly holding a weekly seminar in which class discussion of the mentorships is encouraged. Teachers should also meet several times with the mentors to discuss student progress and achievement. Finally, students should be encouraged to collaborate with their mentor to create an end product of their experience that is evaluated by the mentor.

Mentorship programs can play a valuable role in the education of the gifted and talented. On the following page you will find a fictional narrative about a mentorship program created by a high school choral teacher. This is intended as an example that can be adopted and tailored to any individual music teacher.

Mentorship Example: Mr. Soprano's Choral Class

Problem: Mr. Soprano has two students in his show choir who consistently perform well above the level of the other students in his class. Mary and Jim frequently express their interest in performing solos with the group. Mary is also a standout performer in the concert choir, while Jim is always heavily involved in the theater program, winning many lead roles in school plays and musicals. Although they are always attentive and participate in class, Mr. Soprano is surprised when both students visit his office one day and tell him that they are unchallenged and bored by the show choir. Mr. Soprano determines that both students would be greatly helped out by a mentoring program.

Mary's Solution: Mr. Soprano locates a local opera singer who is incredibly interested in mentoring Mary. The opera singer has had a very distinguished career and is currently playing the lead role in the city's production of *Aida*. Mary and the opera singer set up two weekly meeting times, one of which is used as a vocal lesson, the other which is spent at the opera house. When Mary visits the opera house, she participates in the production of the current opera, even playing a small role in the chorus. During these visits, she has the opportunity to talk with other members of the opera company, the directors, and the stage workers. Mary discovers that she is very interested at pursuing a career in operatic singing from her experience.

Jim's Solution: Mr. Soprano finds a local musical theater director who is very willing to work with Jim. The theater director is an accomplished performer and director, whose credits include several Broadway roles. Jim meets with the director three times a week and assists with the direction of the theater's production of "Guys and Dolls." He also talks with the performers and decides that he is definitely interested in a directing and performing career in musical theater.

Assessment Strategies: For their final product, each student confers with his or her mentor and determines a strategy that will demonstrate what the student has learned during the mentorship. Mary and her teacher present a joint recital of operatic literature, while Jim and his teacher produce a video documentary of the production of "Guys and Dolls," highlighting Jim's role in the creation of the musical. Both students report that their mentor experiences had a positive effect on their education and helped guide them to future career options.

Computer-Aided Instruction

The development of technology has opened the doors to many new pathways of learning for gifted and talented students. As Ronald Thomas (1990) points out, "students can acquire, through high tech tools and new learning systems, a range and quantity of musical skill that have not been readily available through traditional teaching processes" (56). Computer-aided (or assisted) instruction (CAI) is one such method of helping expand the curriculum for gifted and talented students in the classroom.

Thomas holds that with the use of sequencers, MIDI keyboards, and computer programs can revolutionize the teaching of music. CAI can be used, according to Thomas, either to build individual skills or to examine new ways of exploring already developed skills. Thomas outlines three important components:

- A creative, exploratory plan of instruction that is based on aural rather than notational skills.
- A set of the instructional tools that will assure individual skill growth. An optimal set-up will include a computer, basic CAI skill programs, a tool that visually reinforces pitch production for sight-singing and ear-training skills, a synthesizer, a sequencer, and a variety of audio equipment.
- A superior, skilled music educator who thinks musically.

Thomas also states that any strategy that utilizes CAI should be "planned around a musical idea that draws on the previous experience, but...should also involve new concepts and structural procedures" (57). For example, a theory class could use a common notation program and a synthesizer to create improvised compositions and produce their work in hard copy form. It is through these types of activities that individual gifted and talented students may benefit from CAI.

The use of technology can be very beneficial to students, but it also has as much potential to fail as to succeed. Joyce VanTassel-Baska (1988) offers the following guidelines that "provide a sound basis for the utilization of computers with gifted learners" (400):

1. Use the computer as an intellectual tool
2. Use computer-assisted instruction judiciously
3. Avoid computer literacy courses
4. Prevent technology from dominating instructional programs for the gifted
5. Develop an implementation plan for computer utilization
6. Recognize that educational systems change slowly

All of these guidelines are fairly straightforward, with the possible exception of number six. This guideline recognizes the fact that there is still much resistance to the use of technology in the classroom, particularly by teachers who are more familiar with tried-and-true methods of teaching. Keeping this in perspective, it is then possible for a teacher to create a dynamic gifted classroom with the help of technology and CAI.

Independent Study/Self-Guided Study

One way of accommodating the gifted student in the regular classroom is through the use of an independent study model. In this model, students identified as gifted and talented are allowed to periodically use class time to work on self-developed projects that will further their learning in some aspect of the curriculum. Like curriculum compacting, this approach allows students who already "know" the content of the class to progress beyond the limits of the classroom. Unlike that teaching strategy, independent study puts more of the learning in the hands of the individual students.

A teacher wishing to implement self-guided study will probably find that student-teacher contracts are the best way of managing student learning. As Beverly Parke (1989) explains, "contracts are written agreements between teachers and students that outline what students will

learn, how they will learn it, in what period of time, and how they will be evaluated" (70). A student entering into self-guided study should be prepared to propose a contract to the teacher, who can then either approve it or recommend revisions. This contract should detail the purpose of the independent study, the ways in which that purpose will be achieved, and the final product of the study. It should also propose an assessment method for that final product. Below is an example of one such teacher/student contract.

Independent Study Contract

Name: _____ **Class:** _____

Purpose: I wish to learn more about the improvisational style of Miles Davis.

Activities: Over the course of the next four weeks, I will:

1. Research and write a short paper describing the life of Miles Davis.
2. Transcribe no fewer than three solos of Miles Davis.
3. Be able to describe and perform an improvised solo in the style of Miles Davis.

Final Project: I will make a presentation before the class in which I briefly describe the life and musical styles of Miles Davis, perform a transcribed solo, and perform an original solo in the style of Miles Davis.

Assessment: My project will be assessed based on a portfolio that is composed of all of the work that I complete for the project.

_____ _____

(Student signature) (Teacher signature)

SCAMPER Techniques

Another approach for teaching the gifted and talented in an arts class is the SCAMPER technique. Developed by Robert Eberle, Jeanette Parker (1989) advises that the technique is useful for modifying an existing curriculum to enhance the creative processes of the gifted. The term SCAMPER is an acronym and stands for "Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to Other Uses, Eliminate, or Reverse." Parker explains that these techniques should be applied to the regular curriculum in order to make them more challenging for the gifted. She also offers several examples for each of the seven possible curriculum modifications included in SCAMPER.

Applications of the SCAMPER Technique to a Musical Classroom

1. Substitute. Substitute a different instrument in a musical effect in a musical composition to change the emotional impact communicated to the listener (i.e. portray sadness with a guitar rather than a violin).
2. Combine. Combine two paradoxical songs to create a new medley or round (i.e. combine the Confederacy's "Dixie" with the Union's "Battle Hymn of the Republic).
3. Adapt. Adapt a song originated in one style into another (change "Autumn Leaves" from a jazz ballad into a latin samba tune); adapt the text of a poem into a vocal song to be performed by the composer.
4. Modify. Change the tempo, meter, or key of a piece of music and perform it.
5. Put to other uses. Take a musical composition and create a video presentation that reflects the music.
6. Eliminate. Remove a vocal part from a song and re-score it to retain the original intent of that song.
7. Reverse. Use instruments in a way not usually associated with that instrument (i.e. compose a classical concerto for drum set).

adapted from J. Parker, *Instructional Strategies for Teaching the Gifted, pp. 270-271)*

Conclusion

There are many other teaching techniques that can be applied to the gifted and talented in the music classroom, but most do not go beyond the basic concepts discussed in this chapter. For further information on the teaching practices in this chapter and others not mentioned, consult the sources listed in the back of this paper. Also, be aware that your very own gifted students may be able to come up with even more original methods for teaching them than are listed in any book or article.

Finally, it is important to note that the most important part of gifted education is the student. Every decision that a teacher makes concerning their education should revolve around student needs. Any form of gifted education should ultimately result in the enrichment of an individual student's education. It is to this goal that all teachers of gifted and talented must dedicate themselves.

Chapter Four: Works Cited

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